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THE NEXT STEPS

Social gatherings postponed

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As of now, all social gatherings held by registered student organizations are postponed until at least Feb. 19, according to an email sent to the university community.

For the first month of the semester, administrators will monitor testing rates before social gatherings can take place after Feb. 19. Sentinel testing will continue in the same fashion as last semester, providing free testing to students, staff and faculty.

According to the Ole Miss COVID-19 dashboard at the

time of publication, there have been 29 new confirmed cases reported by the university over the past week. There are seven active confirmed cases and no active campus outbreaks. Quarantine bed availability is also at 99.4% and isolation bed availability is at 96.5%.

In Oct. 2020, the university introduced a plan to begin a two-week process to allow some off-campus social gatherings under the parameters. This included Greek life events like formals or date parties, which were allowed in specific cases. This semester, all groups must submit COVID-19 plans for in-person events, activities, meetings and programs.

STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE CHANGES TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY

University administration has approved a new distribution of funding through the student activity fee, which will now include a category devoted to diversity, equity and inclusion programming.

SEE PAGE 3

UM FORWARD DRAFTED



The Chicago Red Stars drafted Ole Miss soccer's leading goal scorer, Channing Foster on Wednesday, Jan. 13 during the virtual 2021 National Women's Soccer League College Draft.

SEE PAGE 6

OPINION: WE ALL SAW 2021 COMING

"While 2020 was often described as 'unprecedented,' 2021 thus far — COVID surge, far-right insurgency and all — has been predictable," writes opinion editor Katie Dames.

SEE PAGE 11

As cases rise, first-dose distribution stalls

Second doses secure, but no new appointments available

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Many Mississippians have been left unable to schedule appointments to receive their first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine after thousands of requests flooded the system to arrange times for vaccination. As of Jan. 13, 52,000 residents have been scheduled to receive vaccines within the next two weeks, and there are no more available appointments for this month.

"We understand the frustration brought on by this sudden change of plans. We will certainly keep all Mississippians updated regarding additional vaccines," the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) said in a statement. "Mississippians should understand that we can only vaccinate residents based on vaccine availability. We will open additional vaccination appointments as we receive more vaccines."

The MSDH said its website and its server was "not prepared for the surge of page visits" after its announcement of vaccine availability for Mississippians over 65 years old and younger people with underlying conditions on Tuesday, Jan. 12. Some callers waited hours on the COVID-19 vaccine hotline, only to be pushed back in line or to receive no appointment at all.

Gov. Tate Reeves pinned the rush on the wider scope of availability, adding that "restricting access" was a worse alternative than surging inquiries for appointments.

"In other states, vaccines are expiring because of a dogmatic attachment to 'tiers' and most residents have no hope of receiving a vaccine unless they are connected to an 'essential business,'" Reeves said. "That's wrong.



PHOTO COURTESY: MSDH
Dr. Thomas Dobbs

Every life is essential, and we should give all a chance to get in line."

After Wednesday's scramble for appointments, the MSDH said there were no appointments left until February, but on Friday, State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs said that the anticipated February vaccine infusion is in addition to the weekly allocation that Mississippi receives. At the time of publication, there were no available appointments for first vaccines on the MSDH website.

On Friday, the MSDH announced a new shipment of vaccines, meant to support ongoing appointments at drive-thru sites and community partners. This "modest amount" is planned to increase available appointments and vaccination locations during the last week of January. On Sunday, Reeves celebrated the efforts of the rollout after Mississippi surpassed 100,000 first and second-dose vaccines given.

"The additional vaccine will be distributed to community partners in a manner that seeks to address both geographic and racial disparities," the department said. "We anticipate that we will have additional drive through appointments, in more locations, the week

SEE VACCINE PAGE 3

Who can be vaccinated?

Individuals over the age of 16 can receive the Pfizer vaccine, and those over 18 can receive the Moderna vaccine. Pregnant women, lactating women and those who are immunocompromised may take the vaccine.

Who should not be vaccinated?

You should not take the vaccine if you have had severe reactions from previous vaccines or injectable medications.

What if I have already had COVID-19?

You can be vaccinated if you have tested positive for COVID-19 after you wait until your isolation period is over and symptoms have improved.

When can I get an appointment?

After the rush to schedule appointments when the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) opened availability, no additional appointments are available for January. The MSDH hopes to receive a large shipment of vaccines in mid-February.

Can I still get an appointment for my second dose?

If you have had a dose already, your second shot should be available as planned.



Back on campus

Students return to a snowy Oxford after eight weeks of winter break

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ASB adapts student activity fee to promote diversity

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For the first time since the state Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Board of Trustees approved the implementation of a \$5-per-semester student activity fee in 2015, the university will change how it allows the Associated Student Body to distribute the funds. A portion of the fee will now be dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion programming and another portion will create a fund to encourage cross-organization collaboration.

“Over the past three years I’ve been working in treasury, I’ve been looking at the first student activity fee proposal. This doesn’t really apply to what we’re using this funding for anymore, and stuff has really changed,” ASB Treasurer Gianna Schuetz said.

Schuetz said she initially wanted to revamp how her office could distribute funds to incentivize student organizations to make greater commitments to diversity and inclusion.

“This idea came up this summer when all of the movements with Black Lives Matter got louder,” Schuetz said. “I knew this was something that was obviously very important, and it’s clear on our campus that this is a big need.”

ASB president Joshua Mannery supported Schuetz in her efforts and said he felt that this new way of distributing funds falls in line with the commitment he made in the fall to focus on “repair” for minority communities at UM.

“One thing I realized last semester is that no matter how hard we try to connect with students, hear students and serve students, there is still so much more work to be done,” Mannery said. “COVID has taken away a lot of opportunity for us to flex the ideas for the big changes we had, but one thing, if nothing else, that’s been apparent is that commitment to (diversity, equity and inclusion).”

While promoting diversity and equity education was Schuetz’s



PHOTO COURTESY: ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

ASB Treasurer Gianna Schuetz has served in the treasury office for the past three years.

focus, she said that while working in the ASB office of the treasurer, she had also seen significant amounts of money “left over” from the student activity fee every semester and wanted to address that issue.

“We used to limit the amount of each request funded to 75% for food requests and then 80% for all other requests. Now, that’s going to be 95% for all requests,” Schuetz said. “We’re significantly increasing the amount of funding organizations can get.”

While registered student organizations will be able to request up to \$6,000 in funds for events, speaker fees and other operational costs, they will also

be able to request an additional \$2,000 for diversity, equity and inclusion programming. The rest of the money will be placed in a “competitive fund,” and organizations will submit competing proposals each semester to have access to it.

“We’re asking organizations to collaborate, so at least two organizations have to come up with an idea for a big event on campus,” Schuetz said. “They can put on a huge event for all of campus, like a big concert, a big festival meant for all students to be able to go and participate.”

After a month and a half of taking submissions, Schuetz said her office will decide a winning event to fund each semester.

Oxford mayoral race begins

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Oxford Mayor Robyn Tannehill, while still in her first term, announced on Jan. 4 that she will be running for re-election. Unlike her 2017 bid for mayor, though, Tannehill will not be running unopposed this year. Shortly after Tannehill’s announcement, 18-year-old Oxford native Brandon Pettis declared his entry into the race.

Both candidates will run as Independents.

While Tannehill ran as a Democrat in 2017, she said her decision to run as an Independent this year was based on her belief that political affiliation is not a big factor when it comes to resolving municipal issues. Tannehill also said in her announcement that there is still a lot of work for her administration to do in Oxford.

“We have laid the groundwork for some exciting projects that I want to see through,” Tannehill said.

Some of the projects that Tannehill is working on include improving the intersection of Highway 7 and University and upgrading city buildings. If reelected, she said she would like to see these projects completed in the next four years.

Pettis, who graduated from Oxford High School in 2019, said that his platform will focus on the economy, including securing funds for infrastructure improvements and supporting local businesses.

Pettis is currently enrolled at Northwest Mississippi Community College and majoring in political science. He said he’s been focusing on the “business aspect of life” and paying close attention to the city’s budget for the last few years.

The main initiative Pettis has planned is called “Oxford First,” which would secure funds to continue infrastructure projects that Tannehill and her administration have been working on.



PHOTO COURTESY: CITY OF OXFORD

Mayor Robyn Tannehill announced she is running for a second term. Tannehill will face 18-year-old Brandon Pettis, a student at Northwest Mississippi Community College.

VACCINE

continued from page 1

of January 25 based on vaccine forecasted to be available at the end of next week.”

Though first doses will be widely unavailable in the coming week, those who have already received or are scheduled to receive their first dose of the vaccine will be able to schedule time to receive the second portion of the vaccine. For those who received the Pfizer vaccine, the second dose is due 21 days or after. For the Moderna vaccine, the second dose is due 28 days or after. Though there are enough second doses from each provider for every person who received a first dose, patients should not switch manufacturers for the second dose; if the first dose was Pfizer, the second dose should also be Pfizer.

So far, 109,354 people have been vaccinated in the state. Of those, 62% of patients were white, 14% were Black, 1% were Asian and 22% were labeled as “other.” On Jan. 17, the MSDH reported an additional 1,606 cases of COVID-19 in Mississippi and 40 deaths, putting Mississippi’s COVID-19 cases since Feb. 2020 at 252,475 cases, with 5,521 deaths. Dobbs said that January “will likely be the worst month for COVID deaths by far.”

As of Sunday, there are currently 210 ongoing outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities, including five in Lafayette County.

In Lafayette County, 2,381 people have been vaccinated as of Sunday, Jan. 17.

On Jan. 8, the university’s COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force met for the first time. The task force, a team of 14 members of the university community, was assembled in December to develop a strategy for campus immunization. Dr. Joshua Sharp, associate professor of pharmacology and member of the task force, wrote on Twitter that after the meeting, he was confident that “as soon as (the task force) gets vaccine from the state, we’ll be ready to put shots in arms within hours.”

Dr. Sharp also said pharmacy students will play a large role in distribution, but how was not specified. At the time of publication, members of the task force could not be reached for comment.

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County overdoses are on the rise, officials say

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Drug overdoses in Lafayette County are rising higher than numbers seen last year, according to a statement from the Lafayette County Metro Narcotics Unit. As of Jan. 13, four overdoses have occurred, and three of them have resulted in death.

“The trends seen over the last couple of months are prescription pills (Percocet, hydrocodone, Xanax and oxycodone) being pressed with fentanyl, along with fentanyl in meth, ecstasy, and heroin,” Alex Fauver, commander of the Lafayette County Metro Narcotics Unit, said in a statement.

In September, the narcotics unit released a similar statement because of rising overdoses in the Lafayette County area. Many of the overdoses at that time were attributed to “dirty dope” being bought on the dark web or in other states. One of the overdoses in 2020 resulted in the death of a student.

“It’s not coming from a factory or a pharmaceutical



PHOTO COURTESY: LAFAYETTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

factory, so there’s no telling what’s in it,” Fauver told The Daily Mississippian last year. “You’re seeing a lot of synthetic stuff, and like I said, just about all of our ecstasy has been coming back from the crime lab as methamphetamine.”

University of Mississippi students struggling with substance abuse are encouraged to contact the William Magee Center by calling 662-915-6543 or email at wellnessedu@olemiss.edu.



IN SECURITY FOOTAGE OBTAINED BY THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN, TWO PEOPLE ARE SEEN ENTERING AN APARTMENT BUILDING AT THE ARBORS, WHERE SEVERAL BURGLARIES HAVE BEEN REPORTED.

Students arrested in connection with burglaries

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Two students have been arrested in connections with multiple home and auto burglaries that took place in the early morning hours of Jan. 14 according to a tweet from the Oxford Police Department.

Accountancy major Ethan Pruitt and psychology major Savannah Nagle were arrested on Thursday, and multiple stolen items were recovered by police, according to OPD. It is unclear

what charges they will face, if any.

Some of the burglaries Nagle and Pruitt were arrested in connection with happened at The Arbors, a residential community on College Hill Road where many college-aged women live.

In a video obtained by The Daily Mississippian, two people are seen climbing the stairs of one of the buildings at The Arbors wearing a house robe and large jackets. One of the figures attempted to cover a front-door camera while trying to open the

door of the apartment, but did not succeed. Later in the video, the two figures are seen running down the stairs of the apartment building carrying items before running out of frame.

Investigators will be in contact with the victims in the burglaries to return their stolen items. Members of the public who have had property stolen are encouraged to contact the Oxford Police Department at 662-232-2400 and speak to an officer to file a report.



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Medical marijuana distribution to begin by August

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Mississippians voted last November to pass Initiative 65 which legalized medical marijuana in the state. The initiative was citizen-sponsored and will allow patients who have one of 22 debilitating medical conditions to acquire medical marijuana with a prescription.

Now, Mississippians can anticipate seeing full plans of the program by this summer. In July, the Mississippi State Department of Health will outline the rules and framework. By Aug. 15, licenses will be distributed, beginning the program.

Mississippi is one of 35 states to have legalized medical marijuana, while the majority of the remaining 15 states only allow the sale of cannabidiol (CBD) oil. CBD is a non-psychoactive component found in marijuana.

Conor Dowling, an associate political science professor at the University of Mississippi, said the state's passage of Initiative 65 was expected.

"The majority of states now have, at a minimum, legalized medical marijuana," Dowling said. "In only six states is marijuana still 'fully' illegal. Under that backdrop, I'm not surprised that the initiative was proposed and that it passed."

Following the election results, the MSDH is working toward meeting the Initiative 65 deadlines to ensure the medical marijuana program is fully operational and available to the public, according to the department's communication director Liz Sharlot.

"We understand the broad public interest in this program and ask for your patience as we develop the necessary plans to go forward late next summer," Sharlot said.

The challenges that may delay the legal sale of medical marijuana

For example, Arkansas le-



FILE PHOTO: BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Sheriff Joey East speaks about the medical marijuana proposal at Gertrude C. Ford Center on Sept. 30, 2020. East was opposed to Initiative 65, but it passed in the November election by a wide margin.

galized medical marijuana in 2016. However, the state did not transact its first legal sale until May of 2019. The long delay was caused by Arkansas legislators who quickly countered the voter approved measure with 24 laws that changed the amendment.

Medical Marijuana 2020 spokesperson Jamie Grantham said Initiative 65 is the polar opposite of Arkansas's amendment, which allowed only eight to nine business licenses to be issued for medical marijuana dispensaries in the state.

"When Initiative 65 was being drafted, we looked at the more than 30 medical marijuana programs in the country," Grantham said. "(Initia-



PHOTO COURTESY: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

tive) 65 is written based on the best practices of those states."

Just like any state medical marijuana program, federal restrictions must be followed. The marijuana has to be grown, processed and sold within Mississippi boundaries, which means there will need to be cultivators growing the plant, processors who turn the plant into medicine and treatment centers where patients

will purchase their medicine.

"That's where the patients will actually be able to go in, swipe their card (and) the receptionist will pull up your account and their profile," Grantham said. "Then, they'll be able — if they have an allotment available — to purchase their medication."

Initiative 65 also states that medical marijuana treatment centers, or dispensaries, will

be required to have a license to sell the product, but the MSDH must first deem them qualified.

Patients will be issued identification cards after a Mississippi physician certifies them as having one of the 22 listed medical conditions, and patients can take their cards to dispensaries to purchase their allotment every 14 days.

Mississippi's next step

With planning stages still ahead, Mississippi joins other states that prescribe medical marijuana to patients with debilitating illnesses such as cancer and multiple sclerosis. Grantham said this is a huge win for Mississippi patients.

"A lot of people have tried to make it a political issue, but it's not a political issue," Grantham said. "This affects people's families. This affects people's quality of life, and in some cases, it has actually saved their lives."

Many Oxford residents supported the initiative in November, including John Greer. Greer said he supports the measure because of the healing effect medical marijuana had on his late father who suffered from cancer.

"I feel like medical marijuana is beneficial, not only for people's health with chronic illnesses, but I also think it's a mercy," Greer said. "It can be a merciful drug based on helping with pain and sleep, and a lot of people don't think about that. That's one of the reasons I'm behind it."

Medical options in Mississippi vary from those in other states, which Grantham sees as an issue that needs awareness.

"We believe that Mississippians should have that same option. They shouldn't have to move out of state or suffer needlessly when this option is available," Grantham said. "My whole team and I are very happy and thankful that this has passed, because it's going to help so many."

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Chicago Red Stars draft Ole Miss forward

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The Chicago Red Stars drafted Ole Miss soccer’s leading goal scorer Channing Foster on Wednesday during the virtual 2021 National Women’s Soccer League College Draft.

Still, Foster plans to return to Ole Miss for her fifth season as a Rebel for the 2021 spring and fall seasons.

“I want to thank the Chicago Red Stars for drafting me and giving me an incredible opportunity,” Foster said in a statement from Ole Miss Athletics. “I’ve dreamt of becoming a professional soccer player since I was a little girl, and I cannot wait to get started. With that being said, I have chosen to stay at Ole Miss through the 2021 fall season to pursue my MBA and exhaust my remaining eligibility before heading to the NWSL in 2022.”

Foster was selected as the No. 32 pick overall and will join former Rebel soccer star CeCe Kizer in the NWSL. Kizer was selected by the Houston Dash in the 2019 NWSL College Draft as the No. 13 pick overall, and she now plays for Racing Louisville FC.

“I am extremely proud of Channing getting drafted by the Chicago Red Stars of the NWSL,” Ole Miss soccer head coach Matt Mott said. “Her dedication, hard work and approach to the game have made her into an elite level soccer



FILE PHOTO : REED JONES / OLE MISS ATHLETICS

Channing Foster dribbles the ball downfield against Mizzou during the 2019 season. Foster was drafted by the Chicago Red Stars in the virtual 2021 National Women’s Soccer League College Draft.

“I’ve dreamt of becoming a professional soccer player since I was a little girl, and I cannot wait to get started. With that being said, I have chosen to stay at Ole Miss through the 2021 fall season to pursue my MBA and exhaust my remaining eligibility...”

Channing Foster
Ole Miss forward

player. I am so happy she has decided to stay at Ole Miss and play her final season with us before turning pro.”

During the most recent 2020 fall season, Foster grasped her fourth All-SEC title making the senior one of the two Ole Miss soccer players ever to hold an SEC title all four years on the team. She also added three goals during the fall season, totaling 33. This makes the senior sixth in school-history for most goals scored.

The tally for 33 goals came after her game-winning goal during the Vanderbilt game where the senior snuck a lucky goal into the net during overtime. The goal was the third game-winning strike the Kentucky-native put onto the scoreboard for the Rebels during the 2020 season.

Foster already has experience with the Red Stars as well. She played for the Chicago Red Stars Reserves team and helped the team win the Women’s Premier Soccer League Central Region Championship in 2018.

“I want to thank the entire Ole Miss coaching staff as well as my teammates for helping me to grow and develop as a player, but even more importantly as a person,” said Foster. “Being at Ole Miss has been such a blessing. Rebel Nation is second to none. I’m excited to get another year in a Rebel uniform. We have some unfinished business! See you soon, Chicago!”

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Recruiting success uplifts season's outlook

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After a season full of either close losses or blowout losses in 2020 for the Ole Miss women's basketball team, the 2021 Rebels have already tied and will likely pass last year's seven wins in the almost dozen remaining games scheduled for the regular season.

When Ole Miss hired head coach Yolett McPhee-McCuin in the spring of 2018, the team was coming off of a 1-15 performance in conference play and a 9-20 record overall in the 2017-2018 season under former head coach Matt Insell. However, in the two seasons since Insell's departure, McPhee-McCuin has struggled to lead the team to a 16-55 overall record with a 3-29 record in conference. Last season, the Rebels lost every conference game for the first time since conference play started in the 1981-1982 season.

While the 2020 season

led many fans and pundits to wonder whether McPhee-McCuin's time at Ole Miss would soon be cut short, she had a comeback plan that seems to be working.

With her charismatic personality and a barrage of recruiting posts on Twitter and Instagram, McPhee-McCuin landed the No. 1 women's basketball recruiting class in the SEC and No. 13 nationwide.

This recruiting class included junior Shakira Austin, the No. 1 transfer player in the nation from the University of Maryland. Austin was initially supposed to sit the season out because of transfer rules, but she was ruled immediately eligible and has since led the Rebels in scoring, blocks and rebounds this season.

Along with Austin, the Rebels added two five star recruits to the team this year: Madison Scott and Jacorriah Bracy. Scott, who was ranked No. 15 in the nation and No. 2 in her position as forward, has

made an immediate impact being the team's fourth-leading scorer and second-leading rebounder.

Along with the new faces on the team, familiar ones have made improvements to their game since last season as well. Senior Mimi Reid leads the team in assists and is averaging the third-most minutes on the team.

With the COVID-19 scheduling leading to less non-conference play, the team is set to take on only SEC teams for the rest of the year, which will be a true test of the Rebels' improvements since last season.

Five SEC teams currently ranked in the top 25, and if the Rebels can win a game against one of the powerhouse programs such as Tennessee or South Carolina, they will have a shot of sneaking their way into the top 25.

The biggest surprise to look for is if the Rebels will make it to March Madness, which has not been done since 2006.



BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Shakira Austin had 26 points in the loss to Mizzou. Ole Miss women's basketball lost to Mizzou 86-77 on Jan. 14.

COLUMN

Here's why Coach Davis's team struggles

BARRETT FREEMAN
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After two seasons at Ole Miss, head coach Kermit Davis finally has a team full of his own recruited players — plus several strong upperclassmen — and he can implement the type of playstyle and coaching philosophy that brought him success for over a decade at Middle Tennessee.

Even with a team that is now majorly his own recruiting class, though, the Rebels have continued to struggle. With a 6-5 record thus far, Ole Miss men's basketball is not having the standout season fans want, and the team is failing in three key areas: shot selection, defense and leadership.

Let's revisit last Tuesday night's game against the Gators where these struggles were prominently on display:

1. Shot selection, shot selection, shot selection

Offensive success tends to stem from the Rebels shooting well, especially beyond the arc. Davis certainly doesn't want this to be the key to success for his team, but unfortunately, that is the game this team of Rebels is playing this season.

The team went an impressive 6-14 from beyond the three-point-line against the Florida Gators and shot 38% from the field. The three-point shooting kept the team competitive in the game.

During the Alabama game,



BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Devontae Shuler led the team in scoring with 19 points in 34 minutes against Florida. Ole Miss men's basketball was defeated by the University of Florida 72-63 on Jan. 12.

Ole Miss shot 1-13 for 3. This team will only stay in games if they can shoot above average from the field. The Rebels refuse to consistently grind out an offensive scheme that will give them either a decent look for a jump shot or a good matchup for Romello White inside the paint. Until they do, expect more offensive woes of poor shot selection and pray the Rebels can have a good shooting day.

2. Knees bent, butt down, play defense

One of the more impressive

aspects of the current Ole Miss team is the defense play at the beginning of the season.

The Davis system hinges on getting down and playing defense that is fierce, stout and forces turnovers. Thus, if the defense falls apart and the Rebels are not having a particularly hot day shooting, the game gets out of reach.

This was demonstrated against the Gators when Ole Miss allowed a 14-0 run while up by five points in the final minutes of the game. Without a defense

that can consistently produce turnovers and force unfavorable shot selection against its opponent, the team won't be able to compete from the tip-off.

3. Shuler or Joiner, whose team is it?

Senior guard Devontae Shuler, who has been a key player for the past three seasons, is joined this year by newcomer Jarkel Joiner, an Oxford local returning to Mississippi after a two year stint as a standout player for the CSU Bakersfield Runners. Both are good basketball players, but

they haven't quite figured out whose team it is yet.

Both want the ball; both want to take a shot; both want to be the guy who is the focal point of the offense. If this two-headed dragon approach continues, not only will neither be successful, but the team will continue to lose games. If the pair can learn to play to each other's strengths and share the ball, then hopefully neither of them will care who is "the man" because they will be winning games.

However, Davis knows that for the offense to be successful, he must run offensive plays fully instead of settling for a contested jumper, and these offense plays should not run through Shuler or Joiner. It must be White who gets the ball in the paint and either makes a move for a layup or kicks it out to one of the guards for a decent shot.

Paired with the stout defense of which the Rebels are more than capable, if the game can run through White where he is setting screens and giving his surrounding cast the best shot opportunities, then this team can go head-to-head against anyone.

This is the third year of the Davis era, and the Rebel fan base wants him to succeed. However, two truths can be said: the Kermit system can work, but the current team is frustrating to watch and needs to continue to address its issues on the court. Otherwise, the boiling frustration of fans and tallies in the loss column will continue to rise.

FOOTBALL

Former Rebels set sights on the NFL

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Former Ole Miss quarterbacks Jordan Ta’amu and Chad Kelly are continuing to pursue careers in the NFL as Ta’amu signed a reserves/future contract with the Kansas City Chiefs on Friday and Kelly tried out for the play-off-bound Buffalo Bills earlier this month.

Ta’amu previously signed with the Chief’s practice squad this season only to be promptly cut after contracting and returning from COVID-19 protocols. He then signed with the Detroit Lions practice squad in December where his contract ended in Jan-

uary. The quarterback then decided to sign a reserves/future contract with the Kansas City Chiefs after being cut once again and brought back during the week of Jan. 13.

One thing to note: Ta’amu will be competing for a back-up position against the other two quarterbacks already on the Chief’s practice squad.

As for Kelly, the former Denver Bronco and Indianapolis Colts quarterback managed to secure a Buffalo Bills try out after his Colt’s contract ended in late September of 2020. It seems as though Kelly is being considered for a roster spot next season, not in the current playoffs.

While both quarterbacks

graduated from Ole Miss, they started at junior colleges. Kelly came from Eastern Mississippi Community College where in one season he won a Junior College National Championship. Ta’amu played two years at New Mexico Military Institute before coming to Oxford.

Ta’amu left Ole Miss after his senior year in 2018, breaking the school record for the most 400-yard passing games, tied Kelly’s Ole Miss record for 300-yard passing games at 12.

A couple of years prior, Kelly graduated in 2016 and holds the record for 22 consecutive games with a passing touchdown.



FILE PHOTO: TAYLAR TEEL / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Former Ole Miss quarterback Jordan Ta’amu recently signed a contract with the Kansas City Chiefs. Ta’amu will be competing for a back-up position against the other two quarterbacks already on the Chiefs’ practice squad.

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ALBUM REVIEW

Taylor Swift reminds us of her unbridled imagination

CADE SLAUGHTER

thedmfeatures@gmail.com

Taylor Swift’s second surprise album of the pandemic, “Evermore,” debuted without warning on Dec. 11, and it delivered as another free-willed creation of lyrical escapism and unbridled creative fun. Some of the best works of art take time to process, and this month of listening has certainly made my heart grow fonder of this 15-track ode to Swift’s roots.

The moments of this past year have been born of the unanticipated, a type of uncertainty that Swift has turned into her lyrical playground. We have been shaken loose from this grid and been forced to reflect on the past, fulfillment in the present and hope for the future. Somewhere among all three of these time frames, “Evermore” resides.

Swift elicited the help of The National’s Aaron Dessner and co-producer Jack Antonoff.

Justin Vernon of Bon Iver also finds his way into a more integral producing position on this album than on “Folklore,” as the indie-rock band HAIM and Marcus Mumford reside as backup on two separate tracks.

Perhaps the most unexpected collaboration here is that with Marjorie Finlay on the track “Marjorie,” a song that builds until you hear the singing voice of Marjorie, Swift’s late grandmother who was an opera singer. What is most goosebump-inducing in “Marjorie” is the conclusion of the bridge. Swift draws on the imagery of a closet of backlogged dreams that her grandmother left to her, a moment that calls for celebration after the reminiscent and sad lyrics preceding. Embodying the dreams of our family is instinctual, and I would argue that Swift made the most of those backlogged dreams that her grandmother left to her.

It’s undeniable that The National’s sound influenced Swift’s venture into the woods in

the construction of her last two albums. Track nine is “Coney Island” and features lead vocalist Matt Berninger. For fans of The National and Swift alike, this song finally brings the two artists together in a form that goes beyond production and finds its way onto an actual tracklist.

“No Body, No Crime” features the sister trio band HAIM, longtime friends and

co-vacationers of Swift. This fictional creation echoes the same upbeat and chaotic lyrical composition of “Goodbye Earl” by The Chicks (formerly The Dixie Chicks). The song ends with two murders, pointed fingers and no definitive conclusion.

If you see me driving around Oxford with my windows rolled down and my head aggressively swaying left to right, chances are that I will be listening to “Gold Rush.” Produced by Antonoff, this track picks up where the pop infused songs of “Folklore” left off.

“Everybody wonders what it would be like to love you, walk past, quick brush.” Those familiar with Swift’s love life know of her boyfriend Joe Alwyn and their last four years of romantic secrecy. Alwyn, who appears as a writer on this album under the pseudonym of William Bowery, has been a subject of Swift’s writing since her sixth studio album “Reputation.”

Heartbreak and kindness are themes in this album, sometimes separate from each other and sometimes in tandem with each other. In “Champagne Problems,” Swift sketches the story of a one-sided love and the indifference of a woman. Heartbreak follows in the bridge as a mother’s ring is turned down and an engagement speech is rendered unspeakable. Kindness is restored when another woman fulfills a past



PHOTOS COURTESY: TAYLOR SWIFT VIA TWITTER

love’s unmatched commitment, a conclusion that is peacefully met by all parties.

“Tolerate It,” situated at Swift’s prized track five spot, throws a massive insecurity out on the table. “I know my love should be celebrated, but you tolerate it,” Swift recites. It’s that pause

between unreciprocated love that lingers in silence and yet steams forward. Heartbreak is even more palpable here because there is no stitchwork or well wishes, just uncertainty and insecurity.

Taylor Swift’s career as a musician stretches from the high school escapades of “Picture to Burn” to this pulled out creation. “Evermore” is a confession of maturity and wrongdoing more so than a frolic through the woods. The song “Happiness” manifests kindness through the lens of mature emotion. “Honey, when I’m above the trees, I see this for what it is.” You know the expression of not being able to

see the forest for the trees? This album is an acknowledgement of years of living under that trance.

The 15 tracks present include the mysterious story of “Dorothea,” whose eyes shined brighter in Tupelo (yes, Mississippi found a shoutout in “Evermore”). “‘Tis the Damn Season” talks about resorting to old love and habits in hometowns during the holiday season while “Ivy” and “Long Story Short” pair evenly with the “1989”-esque beats found on “Gold Rush.”

In her Netflix documentary, “Miss Americana,” Swift shares a rambling of thoughts on celebrity and her position in the music industry. “The female artists I know of have to reinvent themselves 20 times more than the male artists,” she says, “or else you’re out of a job.”

The difference “Evermore” makes is this: it presents Swift’s latest work as a gift with little to no strings attached. Reinvention, as Swift would describe it, was delivered with “Folklore.” Her latest creation lives less in a place of necessity and fanfare and more in the reprise of a care free attitude. With little to gain from this album other than artistic freedom, Taylor Swift flexes as an artist at the top of her game and in a reconstituted league of her own

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ACROSS

1- Snakes;
5- Make lace;
8- From a distance;
12- Search;
13- Tribe ruler;
15- Mower brand;
16- To ____ (perfectly);
17- Poker Flat chronicler;
18- Drop ____ (moon);
19- Association;
22- Rugrat;
23- Irregularly shaped disk;
24- Mongolian desert;
26- Cultural;
29- Metamorphic rock;
31- DDE's command;
32- Line in a play directed to the audience;
34- Flat-topped hills;
36- Hit the mall;
38- Main stem of a tree;
40- Barbecue fare;
41- Name;
43- Reef material;
45- Parisian possessive;
46- Latin American dance;
48- Magazine VIP;

DOWN

1- PDQ;
2- Bristle;
3- Jury member;
4- Rough design;
5- Whaler's direction;
6- Melodies;
7- 9th letter of the Hebrew alphabet;
8- Court fig.;
9- Very loud;
10- Buck follower;
11- Defeat decisively;
13- Druggist;
14- Pretend;
20- "Peter Pan" dog;

PUZZLE SOLUTION

50- Combustible heap;
51- Driller's deg.;
52- Rx watchdog;
54- Not of the Christian religion;
61- Effortlessness;
63- "The Highwayman" poet;
64- Routine;
65- Novel ending;
66- The Merciful;
67- Poker stake;
68- Antlered animal;
69- Swiss river;
70- Remain undecided;

21- Composition in verse;
25- Coffin support;
26- Body of values;
27- Dentifrice;
28- Approximately;
29- Category;
30- Cavalry weapon;
31- Cornerstone abbr.;
33- Twosome;
35- Conscription org.;
37- Drama;
39- Liturgical prayer;
42- Beige;

44- Covers;
47- Hair rinse;
49- Woman's shoe style;
52- Give eats;
53- Go out with;
55- Soft drink;
56- Tree frog;
57- Back;
58- Actress Skye;
59- Env. notation;
60- Requirement;
62- Alway;

Crossword puzzle provided by BestCrosswords.com (www.bestcrosswords.com). Used with permission.

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		6		3	8			5
2		7		1	9	6		
		2		6	4			
7	1						2	6
			1	9		8		
		5	3	7		1		2
3			9	4		7		
		9		2	1	5		

HOW TO PLAY

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

EASY

4	3	5	1	2	8	6	7	9
8	9	7	5	4	6	1	2	3
2	6	1	9	3	7	5	4	8
7	4	8	2	9	1	3	6	5
6	2	6	3	8	5	4	1	7
1	5	3	4	6	7	2	8	9
3	8	6	9	1	4	7	5	2
5	7	4	8	3	2	6	9	1
9	1	2	7	5	6	8	3	4

OPINION

We all saw 2021 coming

KATIE DAMES
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We all saw this coming. We approached the New Year, hoping the curse of 2020 would come to an end as we entered a politically stable, pandemic-free 2021. When I saw that insurrectionists were invading the Capitol, I guess you could say I was initially shocked. But 2021 is a sum of problems we left lurking for years. A century ago, signs promoting mask usage from the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic warned of airborne disease spread before such science was largely understood, but we still face trouble today in asking people to mask up. The ongoing severity of the pandemic and the violent resurgence of white supremacy and anti-government movements illustrates a pattern in American history rather than a fluke of the new decade.

Lack of nationwide bureaucratic processes halted the vaccine rollout across the U.S. and in Mississippi. While

the second doses of the two-part vaccine are available to those who have received the first, the state currently cannot administer new first doses to anybody until February, even to those over 65 years old or with pre-existing medical conditions. Families waited in line on the phones for hours in hopes of scheduling an appointment to protect their loved ones, only to have their hope delayed another month. Coordination between local, state and federal entities could have addressed the current logistical problems earlier, but as the pandemic grows greater, communications seem to have diminished from state leaders.

Even if vaccine rollout were as smooth as possible, public education efforts have been lacking in resolving mistrust of vaccinations. Growing anti-vax movements on social media and historical medical abuse toward marginalized communities have led over a quarter of Americans to say they do not want the vaccine when it is available

to them. Though some have fears of unproven harms of the vaccination, many say that they do not want the vaccine because they do not believe that the pandemic is a real threat. The latter of this reasoning is no surprise when government officials planned large gatherings during a major surge and the President said the virus affects “virtually nobody.” The ongoing politicization of the pandemic, with state and federal officials minimizing the dangers of COVID for months, has complicated the solution to returning to normal.

While pandemic misinformation spreads online, violent far-right ideology also arose as a virulent, nearly mainstream force. Calling the rioters that invaded the Capitol “fringe” sidelines the fact that government officials have legitimized their causes. Reps. Trent Kelly and Michael Guest met with the “Patriot Party of Mississippi” just hours before the event they promoted on Facebook, “Operation Occupy

the Capitol,” took place. National Guard Troops from Mississippi are being summoned to Washington to protect against whatever mayhem is anticipated at President-elect Biden’s inauguration. Social media sites have de-platformed those who incited violence at the Capitol, including President Trump, but this is merely trimming the leaves off of a deeply rooted tree of anti-government conspiracies. As early as 2016, Facebook research found that 64% of those who joined an extremist Facebook group did so because it was recommended to them

by the platform. Now, millions are sucked into the QAnon conspiracy theory that directly contributed to the turmoil on January 6.

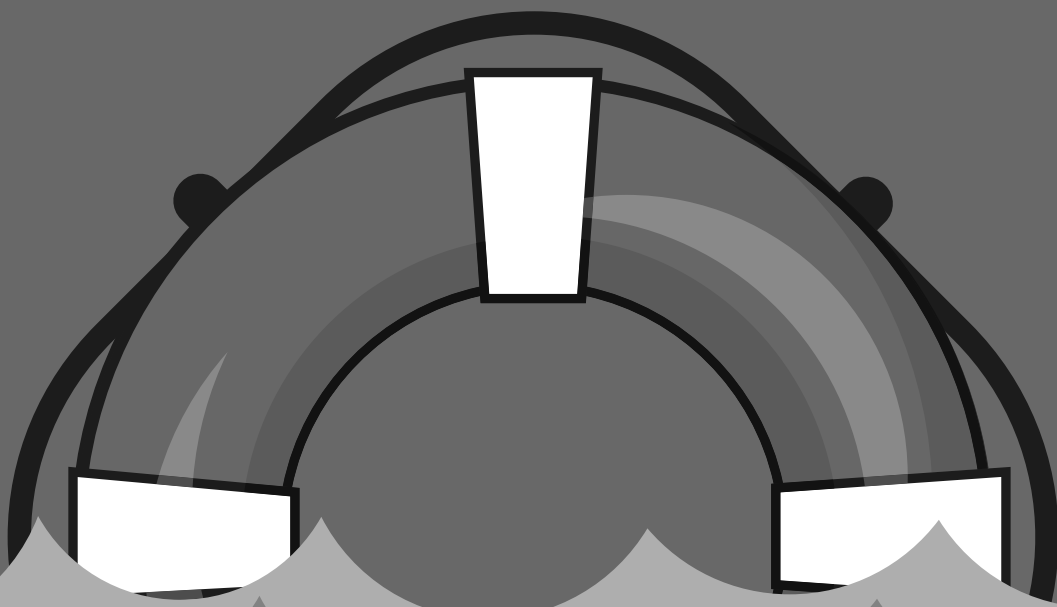
While 2020 was often described as “unprecedented,” 2021 so far— COVID surge, far-right insurgency and all— was predictable. Continued ignorance of the underlying problems so loudly burgeoning across the country brought us to now, where we are forced to listen.

Katie Dames is the opinion editor from Saint Louis, Mo., majoring in international studies

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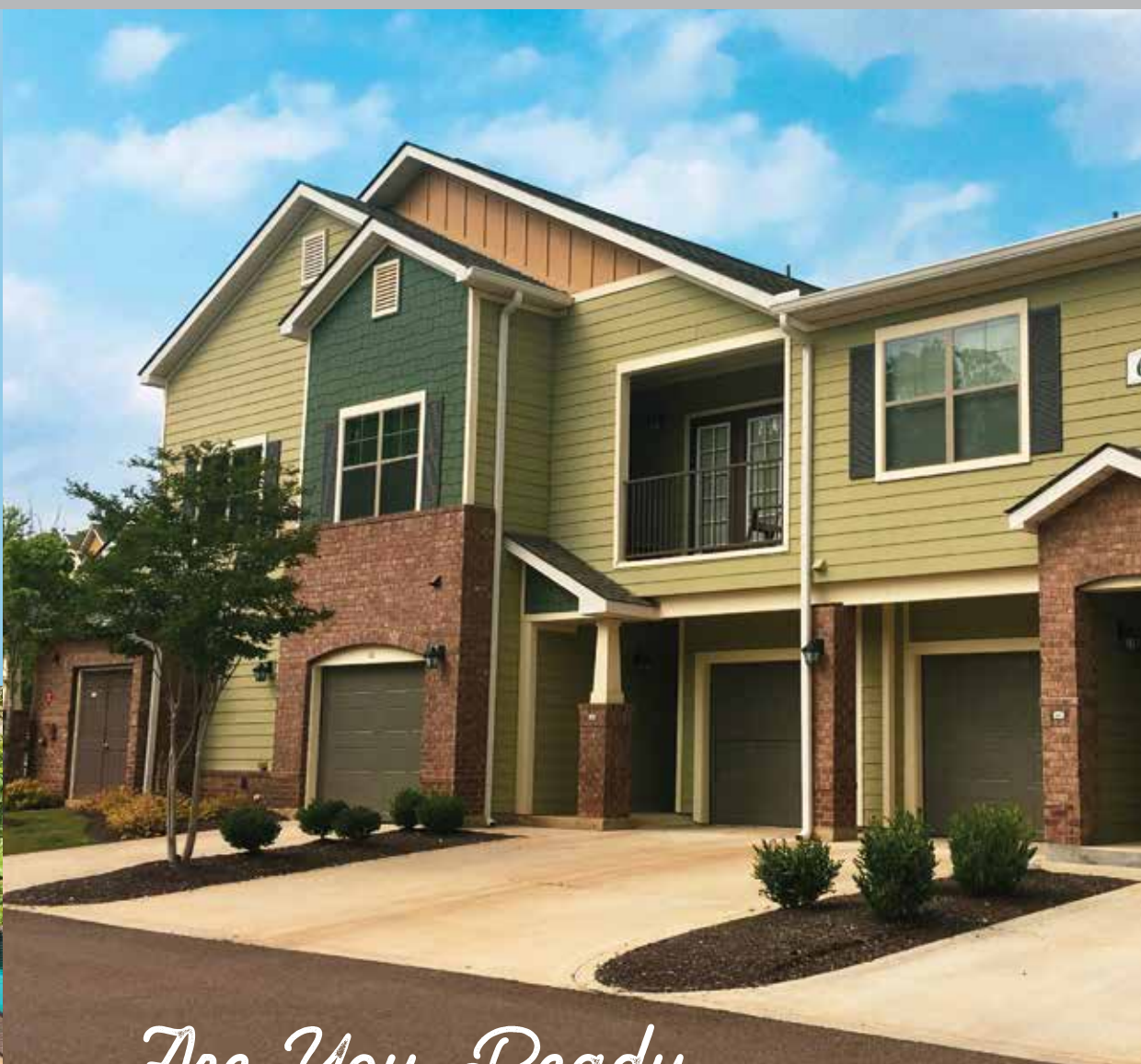
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